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**Series: The Gospel of John**  
**Message: If Not Jesus, Who?**

**Transcribed Message**  
**September 7, 2025**  
**John 6:60-71**

I'm not sure when the idea of public relations started. Some people say the whole matter of public relations and PR can be traced all the way back to ancient civilizations. We know that in the United States, a man by the name of Ivy Lee, in the beginning of the 1900s, came up with this idea. Westinghouse Corporation is evidently one of the first major corporations that had a public relations department. Public relations operate, I'm told, off four P's. The matter of publicity, perception, persuasion, and promotion. You can see within that framework how it is that people utilize this skill set. It has been suggested that Jesus would have done well to have had a PR team, that he could have benefited from some people in his life that would have helped him with this whole matter of public relations, of publicity and persuasion, promotion. We're going to see that again next Sunday, Lord willing, in the seventh chapter. But here's the thing, it really grows out of John 6 and the verses we look at this morning. At the end of this wonderful chapter, we're going to see that Jesus didn't need a PR team at all, but this is what he does do. He always speaks the truth, doesn't he? Jesus always speaks the truth. It doesn't mean it's easy to hear, doesn't mean it's easy to receive, but Jesus always proclaimed and spoke the truth, and we need that same thing yet today.

So, the context of chapter six, as we wrap up this last chapter, let me remind you of four things. The setting is Capernaum. We started the sixth chapter off on the northeast bank of the Sea of Galilee with the feeding of the 15,000. Capernaum became Jesus's hometown. The city of Nazareth, the town of Nazareth said, we don't want you around anymore, and so he really adopted Capernaum as his home place. The place that we're now gathered, we're going to find out, is in the synagogue. That's the way that 59<sup>th</sup> verse closed out. They are in the synagogue. They are in a place where it would have been very common and customary for the teacher to be presenting his truth.

Thirdly, the time is towards the end. I probably should have put the end of Jesus's public ministry in Galilee because he's going to continue to minister in Galilee, just not going to be in the same public way that he has before. In fact, when we get to the seventh chapter, we're going to see that the focus becomes very much the smaller group, the 12 primarily, and there's not going to be the public display and miracles and discourse that we see in the rest of this chapter, and the focus is going to begin to turn more and more towards the cross.

And then this continuing storyline, right? The continuing storyline of the sixth chapter, and we're going to see it all the way to the end of the Gospel of John, is this matter of unbelief and resistance to Jesus and to his message. So, we'll certainly see that in the closing verses this morning.

I'm going to look with you this morning at this section before us, and we're going to see three questions, and then we're going to see a strong word of encouragement. Let's start off with the questions. There are three of them in verses 60 through 67. Question number one, are you offended? Look at verse 60, all the way to verse 62. When many of his disciples heard it, they said, this is a hard saying, who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?

The first question we need to answer is, who are the disciples? Who are the disciples? It's very, very easy for us when we hear the word disciples to think of the 12, right? And that's true. When we hear the word disciples, it certainly encompasses and talks about the 12, but it's a much broader term than that. It's much wider than that. And so, we need to understand that this word "disciple", *methetes*, just means follower. It means learner. When the Gospels and the book of Acts speak of a disciple, they're simply talking about a follower, a learner. A very broad definition in the first century, it was very common when you were to become a disciple of someone that you would physically, literally follow them. And we see that in James and John, right? They leave their father and his fishing business, and they leave and they follow Jesus. He finds Matthew, he finds Levi at the tax collecting table, and he calls him to follow him to become his disciple. He leaves, and he goes and begins to follow Jesus. That might be why when you get into the epistles, the word disciple doesn't appear. So, it's primarily in the

Gospels and in Acts that we see this. We've already seen that John the Baptist had disciples. We've seen that the Pharisees have disciples. And of course, here as well, we have seen that Jesus has disciples.

Here's the point. Disciples come in a variety of shapes and beliefs and understandings. Let's just look at that for a minute. Their spiritual condition is not always the same. I would take the Gospels and the use of the word disciple and describe it in this way. There are some who are disciples who are simply curious about the things that Jesus was doing and saying. You have a whole category, and we've seen that in this sixth chapter especially. You have a whole category of people in John 6 who are disciples. They're followers, they're learners, but in a very, very broad sense, they're just curious. And of course, it doesn't hurt to get a free meal occasionally either, right? And so that drew many people to follow Jesus.

But then there's another category of disciples, and I would call those disciples those who are convinced. They're convinced. I think Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus fall into this category. In fact, the Gospel writers speak of them as being secret disciples. They became convinced about Jesus, but they weren't willing to step out and publicly acknowledge that they were followers.

They were convinced about him, but they were not third category committed. The third category of disciples in the Gospels and Acts are those who are committed. And you know, you immediately think of Luke 14, right? When Jesus calls people to be his fully devoted followers, right? As we think of that language and that terminology, Jesus said, you've got to count the cost. Well, clearly Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had not taken that next step, not until after the resurrection. So, they were curious, convinced, committed. You got to count the cost, Jesus, as you've got to decide you're willing to leave your father and mother. You're willing to leave your brother and sister. You're willing to, in other words, stand alone as a committed follower of Christ.

Now, here's the fourth category, and we're not quite prepared for this fourth one, because the fourth one is a betrayer. Within this company of those who, the Gospel writers, and John in particular, as we're going to see even more this morning, within this group of

disciples, there's one who is going to, in fact, be the betrayer, and we'll talk about that as we go along.

Here's the other consideration. We've got disciples, we've got convinced, we've got curious, we've got convinced, we've got committed, and even within that group, we have a betrayer. But what are the hard things? What are the hard things that offended them? Because that's what Jesus speaks of in verse 60. When many of his disciples heard it, they said, this is a hard saying. Who can listen to it? This word for hard is *scleros*. When you look at the word *scleros*, you can see we just take that word and we use that to describe hardening, sclerosis. There was a hardening that was going on. These things that Jesus is teaching are hard. They're not hard intellectually. They're not hard from the standpoint that they can't comprehend intellectually what he's saying. These aren't math equations. Trigonometry? That's hard. This isn't an intellectual problem. This is describing an acceptance, a tolerating. They couldn't tolerate it. They couldn't accept it. We would say today it offended their modern sensibility, right?

There are a lot of things today that offend people's modern sensibilities. Remember, Mark Twain, in his famous line, he said, you know, it's not things in the Bible that I don't understand that bother me. It's things in the Bible that I understand that bother me. And that's really the reality, isn't it? Jesus is teaching things that are hard to understand, not intellectually. They comprehended largely what he was saying. We bring that over into our world today. Just think of the whole area of human sexuality. It's not hard to understand. We're talking basic biology. The Bible says that in the image of God, he created them; male and female, he created them. We know what a man is. We know what a woman is. We just don't want to accept the objective truth of what God has declared. We want to redefine what God has clearly spoken of.

When it says in Genesis 1:1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He spoke the world into existence. We understand intellectually the ramifications of acknowledging that there's a God who has created, and we don't want accountability to him. And so, we come up with theories like evolution to take God out of the equation. It's hard to accept those things, not because we can't intellectually understand them, but because we don't want to. They offend our modern sensibility. Just keep going down the list, right? Marriage,

family, divorce, the role of men, the role of women, all the things that the scriptures speak of, that the world looks at kind of and goes, really? You guys believe that stuff? It's the same thing that Jesus is speaking of here.

When you think of this statement, the things that Jesus was teaching offended them. What were those things? Well, let's just list some of those out. Certainly, it had to be the fact that he said, I have come down from heaven. Ten times we've seen that. In the sixth chapter, Jesus says, I came down from heaven. It's a declaration that began the gospel, right? In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. It's speaking of the incarnation. It's speaking of the fact that Jesus is declaring himself to be the preexistent one, the self-existent one. He's declaring that he is the very God of God. So certainly, that was hard for them to understand. It was hard to accept.

When he said, I'm greater than Moses. Oh, that was it, right? In the Jewish mindset, there wasn't anybody greater than Moses. Moses is at the top of the pile. He's the greatest of all the prophets. When Jesus says, you know what, I am greater than Moses, that was offensive. That was hard for them to accept.

Of course, we've seen in this most recent study, eat my flesh and drink my blood. Well, they took that literally, and they were offended by that as they well should have been. But Jesus was, of course, speaking metaphorically.

So, here, all these things, and look at the end of verse 61, Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, do you take offense at this? The word offense here is the word *scandalizo*. Well, just listen to that word, *scandalizo*. You are scandalized by this, aren't you? That's exactly what was happening. Now, at this point, Jesus says, if all of those bothered you, what are you going to do? He says, verse 62, then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? So, if you are offended by my claim to be the preexistent one, self-existent one, I am very God of God. If you're offended by the fact that I am greater than Moses, if you're offended by the language that I'm the all-sufficient one, that's all he was saying, right? When he spoke of the fact that he is the bread of life, eat my flesh and drink my blood, he's saying, I am all that you need. That's offensive, right?

They didn't want to hear that. Well, he says, if all of those offend you, let me add another one. Let me add this one, that when you see me ascend.

Now, what does he mean by that? There's some debate as to what he means. I think if we just take it at face value, Jesus is saying, what is going to be your response when you see me ascend into glory? Now, we know that before there is an ascension to glory, what has to happen? The pathway to exaltation involves the path of humiliation, doesn't it? Before Jesus is exalted, he's going to endure the cross. There is going to be the affirmation on the part of the Father that what Jesus did on the cross was in payment for sin. He has overcome sin and death, and the resurrection takes place, and then the ascension. So, it's almost as if Jesus is saying, yes, the ascension is coming, but a part of that whole matter of the ascension is that there is going to be the cross. And the cross is offensive, as we've heard already this morning. The cross is the singular reminder that I'm a sinner. The cross is the reminder that I can't do this on my own, that I need somebody else. I need a sinless Savior.

It is exactly what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 18, for the preaching of the cross is to those who are perishing what? It's foolishness. The preaching of the cross to those who are perishing is foolishness. The cross speaks of the exclusivity of Christianity. The cross speaks of the fact that there is only one way. Isn't it interesting that in all the religions of the world, all the varying religions and worldviews lift their leader, don't they? Whoever it is, they lift their leader and they point to his life. Christianity uniquely alone doesn't just look at the life of our leader, but it literally hangs everything on his death and resurrection. Nobody else does that because nobody else has a risen Savior.

I don't recommend Joe Rogan. Joe Rogan, for those of you that don't know, happens to be an extremely popular podcast guy. His audience is largely young males, and he is worldwide. He had a man named Chad Wright on his "Joe Rogan Experience" where they take two hours and just dialogue about life and stuff. Chad Wright was a former SEAL, former Navy SEAL, and he has come to Christ. This is the most fascinating thing I think I've seen. They're sitting and they're talking. Chad Wright says to Joe, you realize that the preaching of the cross is foolish to you. And Joe gets this big smile, and he goes, what do you mean? The idea of the cross and the idea that Jesus died on the cross for you is just foolish to you. And he went on to literally

explain to Rogan, and Rogan has had more than a few guys on recently that have brought the gospel to him. It's almost like God is at work in this man's life who has this worldwide influence. But the point that he brings to him is unless and until the Holy Spirit begins to work in your life, Joe, you're not going to understand what I'm talking about. You're not going to understand the gospel. And that's exactly what we see here.

And that's why we come to this next question. The second question is, how can you come to Christ? How can you come to Christ? Look at verse 63 through six. It is the spirit who gives life. The flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning those who did not believe and who it was who would betray him. And he said, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

Let's start with those words in verse 63, this idea the flesh is no help at all. Let's just look at that. Jesus is very clear about salvation. We have talked about this. We have seen this in this dialogue, in this discourse. And Jesus says again, salvation is not by self-effort. Salvation is not by self-effort. He has repeated that and he has pointed them to the cross and he's basically saying, what are you going to do in response to the cross? Because the flesh is no help at all. Nobody wakes up some morning and just on their own, by their own initiative says, I'm going to trust Jesus as my Savior, and I am going to commit my life to Christ. The flesh is no help at all.

When he's talking about the flesh, he's not talking about our physical flesh. He's talking about our sinful nature. He is saying the flesh is no help. Our fallen sinful nature offers no help at all. It's unable to respond to the gospel. That's exactly what Jesus said to Nicodemus back in chapter three, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. There has to be a divine intervention, doesn't there?

In the Great Reformation, Martin Luther did battle and debate with a man named Erasmus. And Erasmus, for all the discussions that went back and forth, Erasmus believed that we were sinners. Luther believed that we were sinners. Erasmus believed that there was this little, tiny spark of human goodness in every heart. So, he held out hope that everybody could respond to the gospel because all of us are not fully corrupted in our sin nature, but we have

this little divine spark that's just waiting to ignite. And as Luther and he discussed this, Luther went to John 6:63, and Luther made this incredible statement about how the flesh is no help at all. And this is what Luther said, "That nothing is not a little something." I like that. That nothing. The flesh is no help at all. It's no help. There isn't a little spark. There is no help at all.

So how is it that this happens? How do we come to Christ? Well, it is by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone. That's the point that Jesus is making. It's the Holy Spirit who gives life. It's the Holy Spirit who regenerates. It's the Holy Spirit who awakens us to the reality and the truth of the gospel. It's the Holy Spirit that brings about this transformation. The Holy Spirit is the divine agent, and the instrument that the Spirit uses is the Word of God.

That's why when you're in conversations with people who don't know Christ, and there's an interest on their part, they seem to want to know more. That's the great value of, for instance, just getting the gospel of John and just saying, here, just start reading this. Because the Holy Spirit is going to use the instrumentality of the Word of God to bring this understanding about who Jesus is. He speaks to that, and he says, the flesh is no help at all. It is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Now, look at this last thing. Here it is again. In verses 64 and 65, we're back to this similar truth. Look at verse 64. But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him. And he said, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. Look at this. He's simply saying, again, God is sovereign in this matter of calling people to faith and trust in Christ. God is the initiator. God's the pursuer. God's the seeker.

You look at your life, and you look at when you came to Christ, especially if you were a little older, and you'll see how God engineered and how he brought things together and people into your life. That's what he's saying here. God's the pursuer. God's the initiator. God's the seeker. It's the same thing, remember, that he said back in verse 44.

Look back at 44. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. What did they do? They grumbled. They heard that, and they grumbled. Well, verse 66, what happened? After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. Jesus doesn't change his message. Jesus doesn't need a public relations



team to say, Jesus, can you kind of soften some of this language? Let us help you rephrase this so that you don't offend so many people. No, that's not happening at all. Jesus doesn't change his message. He doesn't change from the truth. He's not interested in just meeting felt needs that people have. He understands the deepest need of their heart is only going to be experienced and realized by means of the gospel, so he's going to speak the truth.

This brings us then to question number three. Et tu, Brute? Right? Right out of Shakespeare. You too, Brutus? Remember when Brutus turned against Caesar as well? That's what he's asking. Jesus asks this, verse 67, to test them. So, Jesus said to the 12, do you want to go away as well? Verse 66, these are hard things. We can't handle this truth. They leave. We start off the chapter with 15,000+ people, right? They migrate and make their way over to Capernaum, and however many hundreds and thousands were there as Jesus continued his teaching, now we get to verse 65 and 66, and they're turning away. They're leaving him, and Jesus turns to his own disciples and says, do you want to go away as well? This is the way the Greek text constructs this sentence. He expects a negative answer. It's almost like a rhetorical question, and he expects a no. It's not so much that he's questioning their heart as he's giving them an opportunity to step out and say, we're not just curious. We're not just convinced. We're committed. We are with you. We are committed. We are going to be your followers.

So, Jesus is, in fact, unfazed in the face of all this unbelief and all this resistance. I don't mean by that that he is not grieved, and he's not brokenhearted because we know he was. In Matthew 23, he looks out and he sees the city of Jerusalem and he's weeping, right? But he's not discouraged. He understands what is happening. He understands the will of God. He understands how it is that God is going to work. And likely now in this part of the storyline, there's twelve of them. From thousands, we're down to twelve.

Peter answers the Lord's question with this amazing declaration, and as you look at this declaration, Peter says in verse 68, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God. Now it starts with a clear juxtaposition. A juxtaposition is just taking two things and laying them side by side, right? You're just comparing them, and what's the juxtaposition here? The juxtaposition is Peter and the masses who have left Jesus.

The hard teaching has resulted in all these curious and somewhat convinced disciples just abandoning and saying, this is too hard. We don't want to submit to this kind of teaching. And yet here's Peter making this incredible declaration, but it's more than that. It's going to be Peter juxtapositioned against Judas, as we'll see in just a little bit. But here, I want you to see that this great confession that Peter gives to us is not the confession of Matthew 16. The confession of Matthew 16 that we're familiar with when Peter says you are the Son of God, you're the Christ, you're the Messiah. That happens at a different place and a different time. This is another declaration on the part of Peter, but it's just as powerful.

Notice that Peter speaks in that 68<sup>th</sup> verse, and he says, Lord, to whom shall we go? He is speaking for all of them as he often does. You have words of eternal life. Lord, there isn't anybody like you. This isn't the word "lord" that you would use in a general sense of sir. This is Lord, I think, with all the implications of that. Lord, we have seen, we have heard, we have watched, we have lived this with you. We know who you are. You are, Jesus, the one who gives eternal life. You are the one that we feed on. You are the one that is sustaining us. You're the all-sufficient one. Even more than that, Jesus, you're the Holy One of God.

When he uses that phrase, the Holy One of God, it's used only one other time in all the Gospels. And he's drawing from Isaiah. Isaiah uses this language often. And when Isaiah uses it, Isaiah is using it of Jehovah God. And so, in effect, Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, makes this incredible declaration about who Jesus is. And this great confession, and he says, you're the Holy One of God. You're the Messiah. You're the Lord, you're the King. You are God in human flesh.

This is an amazing statement on the part of Peter regarding who Jesus is. And you know what? We probably pause here, and we just give ourselves an opportunity to answer the question that Peter so clearly enunciates. And we ask ourselves, to whom shall we go? Who do you run to? Who do you go to? That point of despair, that point of discouragement, that point of need, when the cry of your heart goes out, who is it that we're going to? What truth are you going to follow? Are you going to follow your truth? Are you going to follow the world's truth? Or, are you going to follow the truth that God puts forward? Submission to the Lordship of Christ is ultimately submission to the Word of God. We don't get to keep little areas of our life

for our own determination. We either submit ourselves fully to the Lordship of Christ, and our daily prayer needs to be just that. It needs to be, God, just show me. Show me any area of my life where I'm not walking in obedience to you, where you're not the one that I'm going to, where you're not the one that I'm trusting, where you're not the one that I'm leaning on. Show me that.

Now, these last two verses, a strong word of encouragement. I actually in my original outline had this as a, I think, a stark word of warning, but I switched it. I switched it to a strong word of encouragement. And you might be thinking, as I'm looking at these verses, they don't sound like strong words of encouragement. In fact, what they bring to mind is a fourth question.

Look at these two last verses. Jesus answered them, did I not choose you, the 12, and yet one of you is a devil? He spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the 12, was going to betray him. Now, what in the world in those verses sounds like a strong word of encouragement? I'd like to change the outline and say this is a fourth question. And the fourth question is, what in the world are these verses doing here, and what in the world does Judas have to do with anything that's happened to this point? Judas doesn't appear anywhere else in the sixth chapter, doesn't appear anywhere else in the gospel before this other than in the choosing of the disciples. Why in the world does John, in verse 64, give us this little hint of what's coming, and then Jesus, at the end of the chapter, speak of Judas as well? This doesn't even seem to fit, and yet I want to suggest to you that this is, in fact, a strong word of encouragement.

I think it was a strong word of encouragement in its intention on the part of our Lord for the disciples, and I want to say it's a strong word of encouragement for us, so here's why. I see here in these closing verses the encouraging and comforting word regarding the sovereign purposes of God. That's really the only way we can understand this. It's like Jesus is saying, man is not in charge. I almost wonder if there isn't just a very slight rebuke directed at Peter, almost as if to say, Peter, I love your encouragement, I love your heart, but you didn't choose me. I chose you, Peter. I broke into your life. There wasn't anything that you did to arrange your being a follower of me. Yes, you believed, yes, you trusted. There's human responsibility, for

sure, but behind that is the calling of God, isn't there? There's the sovereignty of God. Even the one who will betray me, the devil did not choose Judas. Jesus chose Judas. We'll see more of this as we go farther into the gospel. So, who is in charge is really the question that's being answered here, and the answer clearly is God is the one who's in charge.

The choice of Judas in no way surprised Jesus. It was, in fact, always a part of God's sovereign divine purposes. You know, one of the things, we could list out a whole bunch of reasons, we don't have time and it's not in the outline, we could list a whole bunch of reasons. Why in the world would Judas have been chosen to be one of the 12? Well, one of the first things that comes to mind is the fact that it was prophesied in the Old Testament. It was prophesied in the Old Testament. This is, in fact, a fulfillment of prophecy.

There's also just the sense in which here is a detractor. Here is one who is going to betray Christ. Jesus invites him into his inner circle to see him every day of his life, and to bear witness ultimately, as he will, before he takes his own life, Judas will say, I have betrayed an innocent man. There are all kinds of other things that we can list out here, but the point, I think, as you close this sixth chapter is it speaks in the face of all this resistance, in the face of all this unbelief, it speaks to the fact that Jesus is not going to be deterred. Jesus is not going to be discouraged. Jesus is not going to be turned away from his absolute trust in the sovereign purposes of God that are at work in his life, and the same should be true of us.

So, what do we take away? Whenever you think the enemy is winning in this world or in your life, and it looks like he's winning a lot, doesn't it? In the world that we live in and often in our life, then we do what? We take a renewed look at this one who reigns over it all. The writer of Hebrews said, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, trusting God's eternal plan. God's plan is for our rescue, and that rescue plan is all about the cross, and it's at the cross that Jesus gave his life, took care once and for all and forever, the problem of sin, and overcame sin and death. And what it is that the gospel calls on us to do is to believe that what Jesus did is enough, that nothing else needs to be done.

Jesus has already spoken to this in that 63<sup>rd</sup> verse. There's not a little something in that nothing. The call of God for us is that we respond to what Jesus has done, believe that we have

sinned and fallen short, and believe that what Jesus did is enough. Believe that and receive the gift of eternal life.

Let's pray. Father God, we are so thankful for the life of our Lord, this amazing picture that we see on the pages of John's gospel week after week of our Lord trusting in your sovereign purposes. Lord, give to us that same sense of confidence. Give to us that same sense of trust. Give to us that same capacity to walk with you in whatever circumstance you have us in. I pray that you would cause us to rejoice in and see your divine provision through your Son and through your gospel. We pray, Father God, that you would open any heart this morning to believe that Jesus died for each one of us, and that if we will but believe, God will give to us the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life. In Jesus' name, amen.